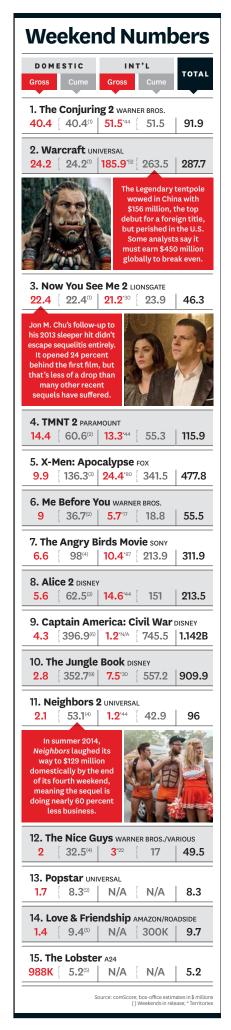
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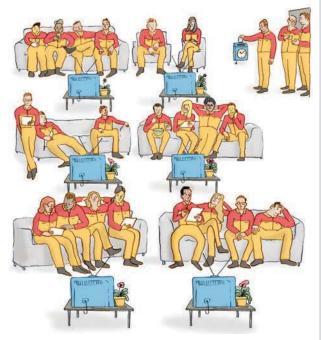
The Secret World of Netflix 'Juicers'

'Project Beetlejuice' quietly pays people to watch shows to create marketing plans. Now they're suing for full-time status By Eriq Gardner

EING PAID BY NETFLIX TO WATCH MOVIES and TV series might seem like a dream come true, but not for some folks in a secretive program at the company known as "Project Beetlejuice." These individuals, known as "juicers," are paid \$10 a film or show to pick the best still images and videos from the thousands of titles in Netflix's library to help its users figure out what they want to watch. They are paid as independent contractors but now are demanding overtime, paid vacation and holidays, health insurance and a 401(k) plan.

Netflix refuses to reveal how many people work in the program, the rationale behind its name or much at all about this line of work. That's because there are two putative class action lawsuits pending in L.A. Superior Court — one filed in November by Long Beach resident Lawrence Moss and the second filed in May by L.A. resident Cigdem Akbay — that claim the hundreds of people paid to watch Netflix deserve higher pay after being allegedly misclassified as contractors instead of employees. Netflix argues in court papers the employees signed agreements that require the dispute be handled privately in arbitration.

Famous for its use of algorithms to help make programming decisions, Netflix apparently requires at least a bit of grunt work computers are incapable of handling. Although the company never has publicly ${\it acknowledged "juicers"-who can work from home}$ — it has spoken before about "taggers," who are



paid to watch a movie and label it as, for instance, 'thriller with strong female lead" to better serve users. In 2014, Netflix even advertised its need for "taggers" in Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Both Moss and Akbay allege they worked closely with Netflix management and sometimes labored more than 40 hours a week. "Theoretically, [Akbay] could set her own hours, but Netflix imposed deadlines for assignments that in effect imposed a rigid work schedule," states her complaint (damages being sought are not specified). Watching Netflix became her primary source of income, and after she told the company this in 2014, she says she was terminated.

One labor attorney says it's not surprising to hear about "juicer" class actions because there has been a rash of lawsuits of late — including from Uber drivers and Grubhub delivery people — testing whether their work fits the definition of an employment relationship. "There is a perfect storm of events, which includes the proliferation of 'gig economy' jobs and the advent of legislation with strict penalties for misclassification," says Kate Gold at Drinker Biddle & Reath. "The employment laws have not kept pace with the new realities of the labor economy."

ABC THREATENS REAL O'NEALS STAR OVER GAY HOLLYWOOD RANT

AN A PRESS INTERVIEW GONE bad kill a television show? On June 9. Noah Galvin, the openly gay star of ABC's The Real O'Neals a coming-of-age sitcom about a gay Chicago teen and his conservative family — gave a brutally frank interview to New York magazine's Vulture blog about Hollywood's "glass closet." In it. Galvin, 22, described another gay actor, Colton Hayes, as "the worst" and Hayes' recent coming out as "f-ing pussy bullshit"; called Eric Stonestreet's Emmy-winning performance as a gay dad on Modern Family "a caricature of a caricature"; and, most controversially, targeted Bryan Singer with a comment about underaged boys that later was stricken from the story after the X-Men director's lawvers intervened.

Sources with knowledge of the events say ABC was blindsided by the interview, which



Galvin (right) could face a reduction in episodes

was set up by Galvin's personal publicist, Maria Candida, as part of an Emmy push for the young star. (She declined comment.) Galvin quickly apologized for his "brazen and hurtful comments" on Twitter, but how all of this bad press affects the low-rated bubble series — which, after an "abusive" waiting period (Galvin's word), was renewed

by the network May 12 — remains to be seen. As the controversy raged, the specter of a reduced episode order arose at ABC, according to one source. An executive producer who had spent four years getting the series on the air was "begging the network not to take action," says this source. (Reps for ABC declined comment on the situation.)

And this was not the first such incident involving the actor's behavior. Insiders say Galvin — a New York native who had only a couple of small acting credits before landing the starring role on Real O'Neals, which is based on sex columnist Dan Savage's childhood — has been warned multiple times about matters of "ego and entitlement." One show source says the set likely will be awkward when the cast returns to film season two later this summer: "He caused a grade-A shit show. ABC screamed at him all afternoon." — SETH ABRAMOVITCH